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ΤΟΣΣ' ΕΔΑΗΝ: THE POETICS OF KNOWLEDGE IN OPPIAN'S *HALIEUTICA*

Emily Kneebone

1. Introduction: 'Reading' Didactic Poetry

τόσσ' ἐδάην, σκηπτοῦχε διοτρεφές, ἔργα θαλάσσης (5.675).¹

This much I know of the works of the sea, sceptre-bearer, you who are dear to the gods.

Oppian's address to Marcus Aurelius signals the end of his five-book didactic epic on sea-fishing and encapsulates the poetic project of the *Halieutica*: no ordinary fish-treatise, this poem illuminates the extraordinary realm of the sea and is presented as a gift and homage to the Roman emperor. The work, written by a Cilician during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (176-180 CE),² attained great popularity in antiquity, was used as a Byzantine school-text and was much admired in the Renaissance and subsequent centuries. In more recent times, however, Oppian has languished in relative neglect.³ At the turn of the twentieth century, Wilamowitz curtly (and characteristically) dismissed the *Halieutica* as tedious and derivative, a poem whose subject-matter stems less from first-hand observation than from a 'stale' academic knowledge:

This poem, which is extensive and technically quite correct, has met with acclaim which has been passed on, doubtless often without its being read. It is appallingly boring; the man may perhaps at some point have set out nets and cast a fishing-rod, but essentially he turns stale book-learning ['abgestandene Buchweisheit'] about fish into verse, [information] which many had already relayed without any personal experience.⁴

Wilamowitz's objections, very much a product of their time, draw attention to the cultural baggage with which (late) didactic poetry has long been encumbered. This is a genre which by its very nature foregrounds the transmission of a specific body of information, and which is often seen to inhabit a space between poetry and technical prose to which our contemporary tastes are unaccustomed.⁵ Wilamowitz seeks experiential authority and factual accuracy from the *Halieutica*, judging the poem by criteria more often associated with the prose treatise or textbook. I would contend, however, that the rhetoric and authority of a poet lie in a sphere distinct from that of the 'scientific' prose author, and as far as may be gathered from the scant and often contradictory evidence, few ancient discussions of literature seem to have conceived of di-

dactic poetry as a genre distinct from other forms of hexameter verse.⁶ Even many relatively 'modern' reservations about didactic poetry, however, still smack of a quasi-Romantic distrust of poetry which professes to instruct; witness the disdain implicit in the account by Alister Cox: 'The improbable art of harnessing poetry to severely technical instruction originated almost accidentally in Greece, blossomed near-miraculously in Rome, and was never afterwards to be convincingly revived.'⁷ The question of how to 'read' didactic poetry, in other words, has long been open to debate, and Aristotle's famous insistence that the non-mimetic verse of Empedocles makes him not a poet but a φυσιολόγος, whose affinity to the ποιητής Homer is limited to their common use of the hexameter form,⁸ finds its nineteenth-century counterpart in an essay by John Henry Newman. For Newman, 'poetry' is restricted to fiction which strives after an ideal, and is set against works (whether prose or verse) which, on the contrary, record 'actual facts'; thus 'Empedocles wrote his physics in verse, and Oppian his history of animals. Neither were poets—the one was an historian of nature, the other a sort of biographer of brutes.'⁹

Though few would nowadays wish to rid Oppian of his status as a poet, it is still surprisingly necessary to emphasise that far more is at stake in didactic poetry—and in the *Halieutica* in particular—than a simple 'versification' of factual material. The task of defining the genre and boundaries of didactic poetry is fraught with difficulty and has rarely met with success even in recent and sophisticated critical undertakings; I attempt no such definition here, nor do I ask how the *Halieutica* might have been used as a school-text, how Oppian obtained his information nor how factually accurate it might be. Instead, this article looks at the poet's *rhetoric* of knowledge and instruction in the *Halieutica*, a didactic poem which provokes difficult questions about readership, poetic authority and the social value of knowledge. The *Halieutica* treats of the fish of the sea (Books 1-2) and how they may be caught (Books 3-5), a discourse which Oppian doubly anchors in the world of the human, through the figure of the fisherman and through the poem's large number of anthropomorphic similes. Yet this extraordinarily imaginative language forces the reader to confront the role figurative discourse plays in the poem: we know that the *Halieutica* was used in antiquity as a school-text,¹⁰ but it would be very difficult even to identify, let alone catch a fish based solely on the information provided in the poem. This is a problem common to much didactic poetry, and the first half of this paper asks whether Oppian's emphasis on the literary or figurative aspects of his fish is compatible with conceptions of didactic poetry as a body of versified facts or as an artificial composite of 'form' and 'content'. The article then turns to Oppian's structural models of pedagogy in the *Halieutica*, setting these in relation to traditional (epic and didactic) images of foolishness and education, and to contemporary discussions of nature, nurture and knowledge.

2. The Power of Analogy

Adam Bartley has recently examined the allusive nature of the similes and digressions in the *Halieutica*, which, as he shows, often thematically or lexically evoke the traditions of earlier Greek didactic and narrative epic.¹¹ Oppian has long been admired for his lively extended similes, which have often been described as near-Homeric, and which recur with a frequency unparalleled in extant Greek didactic poetry.¹² Fish are compared in the *Halieutica* to athletes, kings and lovers, doctors, drunkards and robbers, gladiators, animals and anxious grandmothers, to name but a few; an eel is even imagined delivering a mocking, quasi-heroic speech to its vanquished prey (2.303-07). For whilst fish feature in the poem as the fisherman's prey, they are often endowed with quasi-human qualities; the poem opens with the promise to depict the 'lives, friends, foes and wiles' of fish (1.6f.), a statement which indicates the anthropomorphic manner in which these creatures are to be portrayed. Not for nothing did Newman label Oppian a 'biographer of brutes'. More specifically, many of these similes evoke the epic world, and seem to foreground the oblique (belated and didactic) relationship of the *Halieutica* to martial epic. Not only does the poem teem with quasi-Homeric similes and images—such as the exempla of parental love in the animal kingdom (Book 1)¹³—but Oppian also tends to figure the capture of fish in specifically epic or martial terms. Fishermen tricking a swordfish are compared to soldiers disguised in enemy armour (3.560-65), a crayfish confronts an eel like a battle-hero issuing a challenge to single combat (2.326-30), and the monumental whale-hunt of Book 5 is depicted as a quasi-epic battle, with similes of a night-time assault upon a city (5.114-20), a herald of victory (5.232-35), fighting men (5.245f.) and celebrations of naval triumph (5.297-302).¹⁴ The poet even describes the inextinguishable impulse which incites fishermen towards 'war in the water' (τοὺς δ' ὑγρὸς ἄρης ἄσβεστος ὀρί-
νει, 5.254), a turn of phrase which further echoes this vision of the battles of the epic world transposed to the sea.

Nor is this martial tendency limited to scenes of success in combat, for the *Halieutica* also paints pathetic images of those whose lives have been shattered by war: the octopus, torn from its rock like a child torn from its mother by soldiers (2.313-18), dogfish mourning a fallen fish like parents whose only son has been slain (4.256-61), a dolphin grieving for her offspring like a mother whose children are seized in war (5.553-55). In fact, the poet seems to allude to the world of battle and heroic epic in its every conceivable aspect, assimilating what Conte has called the epic code into a new piscatorial framework, and just as Oppian depicts the behaviour of his fish as inescapably linked to the tendencies of mankind, a distorted version, as it were, of the terrestrial, on a 'literary' level these similes of martial conduct amongst fish bring the epic world into the province of the didactic sea.¹⁵ And this sense of a peculiarly fishy perspective on the Greek epic tradition is compounded by the inverted focus of Oppian's similes: whereas Homeric similes tend to compare martial activity to features

of the natural world, and warriors in the *Iliad* are often compared to a storm, flood or sea, or to animals, Oppian reverses the epic *comparatum* and *comparandum* by depicting his fish as soldiers and his storms as military onslaughts.¹⁶ When springtime returns to the deep, fish rejoice like the citizens of a city released from siege:

ὥς δὲ πολυρραΐσταο νέφος πολέμοιο φυγοῦσα
 ὀλβίῃ ἀθανάτοισι φίλῃ πόλιν, ἣν ῥά τε δηρὸν
 δυσμενέων πάγχαλκος ἐπεπλήμυρε θύελλα, 465
 ὅψε δ' ἀπαλύξασα καὶ ἀμπνεύσασα μόθοιο
 ἀσπασίως γάννυται τε καὶ εἰρήνης καμάτοισι
 τέρπεται ἀρπαλέοισι καὶ εὖδιος εἰλαπινάζει
 ἀνδρῶν τε πλήθουσα χοροῖτυπὴς τε γυναικῶν·
 ὥς οἱ λευγαλέους τε πόνους καὶ φρίκα θαλάσσης 470
 ἀσπασίως προφυγόντες, ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα καγχαλόντες
 θρώσκουσ' αἰσσοῦσι χοροῖτυπέουσιν ὁμοῖοι.
 (1.463-72)

Just as a cheerful city, dear to the immortals—which has escaped the cloud of fracturing war and which the brazen storm of the enemy has flooded for too long—is freed at last from battle and gladly draws breath, rejoicing and taking pleasure in the alluring endeavours of peace, and carouses in the mild weather, filled with the dancing of men and women—just so [the fish], having gladly escaped the dismal troubles and churning seas, leap exultantly over the brine, darting like dancers.

The image of the sea as a *polis* is typical of Oppian's anthropomorphic approach—compare the summary of species of fish at 1.438: αἶδε μὲν ὥστε πόλιν ἐν ἰχθύσιν ('these, as it were, [are] the cities amongst fish'). In the present simile, winter storms at sea are figured as a war, a siege from which fish, the city's inhabitants, rejoice to be freed—directly inverting those stock Iliadic similes of attackers streaming like a storm or rough sea. Yet Oppian's textual *jouissance* continues, for the poet depicts the figurative war as itself a threatening cloud (νέφος πολέμοιο, 463) and the enemy host as a storm (θύελλα, 465), metaphors which once more invert the simile's point of reference, from storm to war and back to storm. In this hall of intertextual mirrors, 'real-life' storms and clouds are likened to war, a martial simile which is used in the familiar epic manner to reincorporate the metaphorical storm motif. Oppian presents us with an allusive, elusive interplay between the literal and the literary, between heroic and didactic epic.

Yet we may observe a more acutely subversive assimilation of heroic epic when Oppian speaks of the ease with which Odysseus, for all his strength and cunning, was slain by a mere fish (2.497-505). On Oppian's account, the knowledgeable Circe gave the deadly poison of the sting-ray to Telegonus, her son

by Odysseus, who inadvertently used it to kill his own father. Oppian takes pains to note the provenance of this poison: Telegonus wields a death from the sea (ἄλιον μόρον, 2.499) against the very man who has already triumphed over so many marine ordeals:

ἔνθα τὸν αἰολόμητιν Ὀδυσσέα, μυρία πόντου
 ἄλγεα μετρήσαντα πολυκμήτοισιν ἀέθλοις,
 τρυγῶν ἀλγινόεσσα μιῇ κατενήρατο ῥιπῇ.

(2.503-05)

There wily Odysseus, who had passed through countless afflictions of the sea in his painful ordeals, the excruciating sting-ray slew with a single blow.

The metapoetic weight of this statement is hard to avoid: a humble fish triumphs over the great epic warrior, and the bastard son slays his Homeric father; these are the traditions of heroic epic seen through a distinctly ichthyic lens.¹⁷ Even a great and wily Homeric hero, we are told, may be humbled and felled by the practicalities of fish and poisons, a statement all the more striking in that lines 503-05 tell first of the cunning Odysseus and his trials at sea, and only then of the ironic ease with which he was slain—by a fish. Here, it seems, the primacy of heroic epic has been replaced by the value of specific technical knowledge. Allusivity and the assimilation of other literary forms had long been central to the tradition of didactic poetry; as Don Fowler puts it, '[d]idactic is a genre of power, which, in contrasting itself with epic and setting intellectual achievement against martial conquest, incorporates into itself the qualities of the opposed genre.'¹⁸ Yet here this incorporative power is embodied in a very physical form, a programme highlighted by the poet's choice of the unusual word κατεναίρομαι (505). The verb, as Bartley notes, previously occurs only twice in extant epic, at Homer *Od.* 11.519 and at Nicander *Al.* 401;¹⁹ Oppian's κατενήρατο has the same inflection and *sedes* as the Homeric parallel, in which Odysseus, far from being slain ignominiously by his own son, describes the bloody exploits of another hero's son: the deeds of Neoptolemus as reported to the shade of Achilles. In Nicander's *Alexipharmaca*, a didactic poem on the antidotes to poisons, the verb refers to the dreadful poison pharicum, which, like the toxic sting-ray, 'easily kills a strong man in a single day' (ἐν δὲ μονήρει/ῥηδίῳ ἀκτῖνι βαρὺν κατεναίρεται ἄνδρα, 400f.). Oppian's use of this verb in the *Halieutica* unites these branches of hexameter verse: whilst the connection with the *Odyssey* highlights the altered relationship of father and son and the programmatic reversal of Odysseus' fortunes (whether or not we read his death metapoetically), the contrast of this verse with the Nicandrian parallel foregrounds the practical value of the knowledge propounded in didactic verse, providing the reader with details of the antidotes by which just such a death by poison can be averted.²⁰ Oppian shows us an era less of

wandering heroes than of the practical and academic knowledge which now occupies the sphere of epic.²¹

Throughout the *Halieutica*, Oppian blends what is often classified as 'science' or natural history with literary and mythological reference. A catalogue of oviparous and viviparous sea-creatures leads the poet to assert that dolphins were once men who dwelled in cities until transformed into their current form by Dionysus (1.646-53)—a legend, as the Oppianic scholia note (*ad* 1.649), which is familiar from a number of sources including the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*. Yet it would be misleading to imagine that these mythological details act as superficial ornament or mere artistic embellishment upon the technical 'stuff' of the *Halieutica*. Indeed, far from distracting the reader from the tedium of pure fact, such information is integral to the poem's entire *Weltanschauung*. A sense of ὁμοφροσύνη (5.444) or unity of mind between dolphins and men is central to Oppian's taxonomy, for these are the creatures closest to mankind, a statement reiterated throughout the poem: dolphins mate in the manner of men, wean and care for their children in near-human fashion, assist the fishermen in catching fish, are taboo to the fisherman's trident and may be considered the kings of the sea, owing their high status in the waves to the favour of Poseidon; as we shall see, dolphins may even act as a surrogate figure for the reader of the poem itself.²² No other creature is discussed at such length or so positively in the poem, and the role of the dolphin is often reminiscent of Mary Douglas' anthropological 'boundary-crosser', a species which occupies a privileged and demarcated social space bounded by rules of ritual avoidance.²³ These creatures' quasi-human sensibilities, set up in the aetiological tale of their metamorphosis, is key to understanding why dolphins may not be eaten, why they aid the fisherman and come on shore to die, and why they often form close friendships with young men.

Through such details, Oppian constructs a continuum between man and fish, from the wise philosopher to the immoral Thracians, from the dolphin and the peaceable grey mullet to the barbarous tuna-fish which eats its own children. This is a differentiation constructed primarily through analogy between fish and men (or animals), whether comparing the two directly (so the 'ram of the sea' is infinitely more terrifying than the ram of the earth, 5.32-34) or, more frequently, by means of extended simile (so the grey mullet caught in a net is like a terminally ill man attended by doctors, 3.108-14).²⁴ Oppian depicts an extraordinarily wide range of subjects in his similes, underscoring that point to which the *Halieutica* continually returns: the fundamental connections between man and fish, between the behaviour of different creatures, and between constituent parts of the cosmos. When in the space of 200 lines an octopus is compared to a cave-dwelling bear, a wrestler, a snake eaten by a stag, a boy clinging to his mother in war, a nursling child and a pickpocket (2.247-418), Oppian's rhetoric evokes not just the proverbially changeable nature of the octopus, but also the broader connections which bind these disparate spheres of existence.²⁵ The impact of the poem lies precisely in this sense of multiplicity,

this interdependence of the various elements of the cosmos. Thus the poet addresses the omnipotent Zeus:

[Ζεῦ...] οἷη σὺν φιλότῃ διακρίνας ἐκέδασσας
 αἰθέρα τ' αἰγλήεντα καὶ ἥερα καὶ χυτὸν ὕδωρ
 καὶ χθόνα παμμήτειραν, ἀπ' ἀλλήλων δὲ ἕκαστα,
 πάντα δ' ἐν ἀλλήλοισιν ὁμοφροσύνης ὑπὸ δεσμῷ 415
 ἀρρήκτῳ συνέδησας, ἀναγκαίῃ δ' ἐπέρειςας
 ἄστεμφῇ πάγκοινον ὑπὸ ζυγόν· οὔτε γὰρ αἰθήρ
 ἥερος οὔτ' ἀήρ ἄτερ ὕδατος, οὐδὲ μὲν ὕδωρ
 γαίης νόσφι τέτυκται, ἐν ἀλλήλοις δὲ φύονται,
 πάντα δ' ὁδὸν μίαν εἴσι, μίαν δ' ἀνελίσσεται ἀμοιβήν. 420
 (1.412-20)

[O Zeus...], with such affection you have divided and separated the radiant sky and the air and the flowing water and the earth, mother of all, each apart from the others, and yet you have bound them all to each other in an unbreakable bond of unity, forcibly placing them under a common immoveable yoke. For the sky does not exist without air nor the air without water, nor is water removed from the earth, but they naturally exist in each other, and everything travels one path, and revolves in one exchange.

Oppian goes on to discuss the embodiment of this principle in ‘amphibious’ birds and fish. Leaving aside the apparently stoicising tone of the passage, and its relation, for instance, to the proem of Aratus’ *Phaenomena*, I want to focus on the image the poet creates of Zeus’ ὁμοφροσύνης δεσμός (‘bond of unity’, 415), that πάγκοινον ζυγόν (‘common yoke’, 417) which unites the world’s different elements. Oppian’s image of the connections between the world’s constituent parts serves as a cosmic archetype for the poem’s own similes: just as earth, water and air are both differentiated and connected, so the system of reference in the *Halieutica* both links and differentiates fish from other creatures. Parallels, similes and analogies forge connections between entities, creating a yoke or bond between different creatures, yet the very principle of the simile is at the same time predicated upon separation. Fish, we are shown, can never be regarded in isolation, but are intrinsically related to these other forms of life, which they must be both compared to and differentiated from. Oppian’s analogies may portray fish in human terms, yet although these are creatures whose virtues and foibles are common also to mankind, the poem’s similes also encourage the reader to question how we are (or may be) differentiated from these fish, a move central to the didactic focus of the *Halieutica*. Any two terms of comparison—Oppian’s fish, say, and a human being—are alike in certain respects, as the analogy points out, but are nevertheless separate categories of being and can never fully correspond to each other, a feature which Feeney has

called 'the obliquity of analogy' and which is fundamental to the concept of the simile.²⁶ In these terms, as Feeney has remarked of Catullus 68, '[t]his dense and bizarre barrage of analogy leaves one with the sensation that similes are no added ornament to the poem, something additional to what the poem is saying. They *are* the poem, they *are* what the poem is saying.... The poem confronts us urgently with the problem of what similes are, what kind of significance they construct.'²⁷

3. The Poetics of Fish?

In bringing fish and martial imagery together, that is, the *Halieutica* draws upon and exploits a tension between educated literary allusion and the realities of the sea and its fish. This tension, however, is no jarring contrast between dazzling poeticism and an unpromising banality of subject-matter, as Bernd Effe has suggested, perhaps a little hastily, of Nicander:

[Nicander] is concerned with the stark contrast between the dry, unpoetic nature of his material and its presentation in poetic form nevertheless. The more unattractive the material, the greater the challenge to the poetic capabilities.... The claim to achieve a practical outcome through this instruction is no more than a gesture typical of the genre, and the reader should see through its fiction.²⁸

Effe here conceives of Nicander as a poet who has no 'genuine' intention to instruct, and whose snakes and poisons should be recognised as little more than an excuse to display his erudition. This is a view expounded in *Dichtung und Lehre*, Effe's typological analysis of didactic poetry according to categories based on authorial intent: the truly instructional ('sachbezogen'), the indirectly instructional ('transparent') and the purely ornamental ('formal').²⁹ According to Effe, Oppian belongs to the transparent type, along with Aratus and Virgil, for although the *Halieutica* does treat of fish and fishing, the 'real' aim of the poem is moral instruction, for which its fish are merely a vehicle.³⁰ Much of Effe's discussion of the *Halieutica* itself is carefully observed, yet his analysis rests upon the assumption of a fundamental opposition, inherent to all didactic poetry, between 'Dichtung' and 'Lehre'—poetry and instruction, or form and content.³¹ This is a contrast drawn already in antiquity: compare Lucretius' honeyed cup, or Horace's distinction between instruction and pleasure, the *utile* and the *dulce*.³² Yet although Horace's dictum advises that the good poet should *combine* these elements, Effe's dichotomy, like Seneca's declaration that the *Georgics* aims not at instructing farmers but at delighting readers, risks creating a static and exclusive polarity between instruction and pleasure, papering over the more subtle relations at play in the *Halieutica* and other didactic poems.³³ I should like to examine some of these questions of poeticism and

practicality by taking a test-case from the *Halieutica*: the depiction in Book 4 of ἔρως or sexual passion amongst fish.

Oppian shows how fish are generally caught by means of their appetites, whether for food or for sex, and are often enslaved by their bellies and sexual desires. Thus the anthias ‘wander everywhere they are bidden by their jaws, their stomach and their insatiable, gluttonous desire for food’ (πάντη δὲ πλάζονται, ὅπη γένυς, ἔνθα κελεύει/γαστήρ καὶ λαίμαργος ἔρως ἀκόρητος ἐδωδῆς, 1.250f.), the rainbow-wrasse are urged on by their avid lust (ἔρως) for the blood of men (2.453), and the octopus is caught by its extraordinary ἔρως for the olive-tree (4.300). The theme of *eros* dominates Book 4 and forms a pendant to the focus on gluttony in Book 3: fish are enticed by a form of bait (usually a female fish, potential sexual rival or object of lust peculiar to their species) which excites their passion and causes them to rush into the fisherman’s trap. Yet although the poet often uses *eros* in the (Homeric) sense of a general desire for food or sex, Oppian also presents the reader with a more high-flown, consciously literary Eros. ὑγρὸς ἔρως (4.2) is declared to be the subject of Book 4, a ‘languid’, ‘voluptuous’ or ‘tender’ love, a strikingly literary depiction which signals the text’s departure from the frenzied mating of the tunnies at the end of the previous book (3.620-48), evoking instead the delicate, Eros praised by Agathon in Plato’s *Symposium* and locating the reader in the well-trodden field of erotic affect.³⁴ Yet Oppian’s take on Eros (or perhaps *eros*—for this slippage is continually at play in the poem)³⁵ is also loaded and experimental, his ὑγρὸς ἔρως absurdly literal. For if we read ὑγρὸς not as ‘tender’ but as ‘wet’, then the book relates in a very different manner to ὑγρὸς ἔρως—a ‘watery’, marine Eros who reigns supreme over the θῆρες ὑγροί (‘creatures of the sea’).³⁶ A familiar poetic trope is again thrown into focus when transposed to the more literal world of fish. But we might well ask how a discussion of the origins of Eros *qua* god relates to the fish’s *eros qua* lust and method of fish-bait, and how appropriate Oppian’s encomium to the Eros of the literary tradition might be when we are dealing with something as practical, as tangible as fishing. Oppian opens Book 4 by addressing the capricious god in person:

σχέτλι' Ἐρως, δολομήτα, θεῶν κάλλιστε μὲν ὄσσοις εἰσιδέειν, ἄλγιστε δ' ὅτε κραδίην ὀροθύνεις ἐμπίπτων ἀδόκητος, ὑπὸ φρένα δ' ὥστε θύελλα μίσγεται, ἀσθμαίνεις δὲ πυρὸς δριμεῖαν ὁμοκλήν παφλάζων ὀδύνῃσι καὶ ἀκρήτοισιν ἀνίαις.	15
δάκρυ δέ τοι προβαλεῖν λαρὸν γάνος ἢ δ' ἔσακοῦσαι βυσσόθεν οἰμωγὴν σπλάχνους θ' ὑπὸ θερμὸν ἔρευθος φοινίξαι χρωτὸς τε παράτροπον ἄνθος ἀμέρσαι ὅσσε τε κοιλῆναι παρὰ τε φρένα πᾶσαν ἀεῖραι μαينوμένην· πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐς μόρον ἐξεκύλισας,	20

ὅσοις χειμέριός τε καὶ ἄγριος ἀντεβόλησας
λύσσαν ἄγων· τοίαις γὰρ ἀγάλλεαι εἰλαπίνησιν.

(4.11-22)

Cruel, wily Love, most beautiful of gods to look upon with the eyes, yet most painful when you stir up the heart in an unexpected onrush, attacking the mind like a storm and breathing the fierce threat of fire, seething with pain and excessive torment. You take a sweet delight in the shedding of tears, in hearing wailing from deep within, in inflaming a torrid redness in the heart, in tarnishing the complexion with a peculiar bloom and in hollowing the eyes and in stirring the whole mind to madness. And you have plunged many to their deaths, those whom you encounter when you are wild and stormy, spreading frenzy. For you rejoice in such revelry.

Oppian's address—σχέτλι' Ἔρως—and his rhetoric of love as a sickness or onslaught of the elements strikingly evoke the traditions of Greek love-poetry.³⁷ Eros is like a blustering storm or a boiling sea (παφλάζων), he is wintry and wild (χειμέριός τε καὶ ἄγριος) and he assails the soul like a thunderstorm (ὥστε θυέλλα). Fire, winds and storms signal the uncontrollability of this god, his imperviousness to the restraints of culture. Yet such well-worn analogies take on a new resonance when we recall that this book depicts the behaviour of *fish* afflicted by *eros*: creatures, that is, who spend much of their daily existence battling the elements: compare the harsh χεῖματος ὁρμή at 1.457 or the all-too-literal θυέλλα at 2.226. Like the simile of the sea as a besieged city, Oppian takes the cultural clichés of an untamed, elemental nature and applies them metaphorically to that very nature, playing the literary against the literal.

Eros flits over the sea, shooting his dark arrows into the deep (4.36-39), and the traditional attributes of the love-god are juxtaposed with the obvious impracticalities of shooting arrows underwater. At the same time, however, Oppian's image reverses the common trope of Eros as a hunter: the fisherman, in hooking his fish through its passions, literalises the figurative 'wounds of love', the poetic metaphor of a lover caught or 'hooked'.³⁸ So the grey mullet is caught by means of a female fish, for as soon as they perceive the bait, the fish throng, rapt by the female's beauty:

ὦδε γὰρ εἰσορόωντες ἀπείρονες ἀμφαγέρονται.
κάλλει δ' ἐκπάγλως βεβημένοι οὐκ ἐθέλουσι
λείπεσθαι, πάντη δὲ πόθων ἵυγγες ἄγουσι
θαλπομένους...

(4.130-33)

And so, when they look upon her, countless [grey mullets] gather round. Forcibly struck by her beauty, they do not want to leave her, and on every side the spells of longing lead them, inflamed...

Oppian returns to the rhetoric of the agonised lover, the language of erotic charms and bewitchment, an image reinforced a few lines later when the mullets are compared to youths ‘enchanted by the sweet spells of love [lit: Aphrodite]’ (θελγόμενοι λιαρῆσιν ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς ἀφροδίτης, 4.141). This is language which gives the dangers of love a literal form, yet it verges almost on the absurd when we recall that this is a mere mullet, trailed in the sea on the end of a hook. Oppian’s anthropocentric model of *eros* is applied to that most unlikely of creatures, the fish: can we really imagine a wan fish weeping and groaning, enchanted by the beauty of a fine-formed female? Fish are not known for their aesthetic sensibilities, and it is hard even to imagine how ‘beauty’ might express itself amongst fish; one fish, to the human eye, looks much like another, and Oppian has already denied fish any beauty in the human sense at all (1.502-05), a statement which is hard to reconcile with the bewitching ‘beauty’ which entrances the fish at 4.131. If fish have no articulated bodies as such, it is somewhat hard to imagine a ‘fine-formed’ fish, or to think of the λιπόωσά...γυῖα (‘sleek limbs’, 4.129) of a (limbless) grey mullet. James Davidson has engagingly shown how often the contrast between dead fish and a high-flown poeticism appears as a topic of bathetic humour in Attic comedy.³⁹ When, for instance, a fish-purchaser depicts himself as a Priam ransoming Hector’s body from Achilles, or averts his gaze like Perseus from the Gorgon, the humour of the scene lies in the absurdity of imagining fish in such inflated, Homeric or mythological terms.⁴⁰ The fourth-century epic parodist Matro of Pitane employs grandiose Homeric verbosity in contrast to his subject, a fishy dinner-menu, and a boiled cuttlefish, for instance, is greeted by the narrator with a quasi-Homeric fanfare: ‘there arrived silver-footed Thetis, daughter of Nereus, the fair-tressed cuttlefish, a fearsome, talking goddess.’⁴¹ Heroic seriousness contrasts with the banality of fish, to comic effect. Oppian’s programme, however, is different. When we read of the tragic exertions of fish destined to die, fish whose passion has led them to the ‘house of Hades’, a refrain which Oppian repeats throughout the poem, the reader is led less to laugh at the ridiculousness of fish grandly imagined than to reflect upon the nature of the connection between fish and men, between didactic and heroic epic. Whereas Matro presents a boiled cuttlefish inconceivably described as a Homeric goddess, Oppian presents a more nuanced picture: his cuttlefish is touchingly described as a girl embracing her brother or husband (4.151-59). The intense humanity of the *Halieutica*’s fish stems not from the inapplicability of such anthropomorphism but precisely from its strange applicability.

Following an allusive discussion of Eros’ genealogy and an encomium to his power, both of which are familiar poetic and philosophical subjects, Oppian describes how the kindly parrot-wrasse help their comrades by pulling them out of the net, extending their tails ‘like a hand’ (ἥϋτε χεῖρα, 4.59), just as men climbing a hill in the dark hold hands (4.65-70). Only upon reflection, however, is it evident that the focal point of this simile marks out the very difference between fish and humans: fish, after all, have no hands, nor could they ever climb

a hill-top, and that very simile which ought to unite man and beast shows fish being caught with ease by the fishermen: this, again, is the obliquity of analogy.⁴² It is on just such grounds of anthropomorphism, however, that Peter Toohey has objected to the fragmentary *Halieutica* attributed to Ovid. Speaking of the scar-fish which, like Oppian's parrot-wrasse, effect a rescue by grasping each other's tails ([Ov.] *Hal.* 16-18), Toohey condemns the writing as too 'bizarre' and 'histrionic' to be taken seriously. The Ovidian *Halieutica*, in his opinion, must instead be a parody of didactic poetry:

In the broadest of senses, a passage that attributes such self-conscious and humanlike intelligence to such unlikely recipients as fish is pulling our leg.... Ovid mocks more than he instructs. The mockery is no doubt directed towards poems such as that of Grattius.⁴³

Fish and human behaviour, according to Toohey, belong to fundamentally different discourses, and no didactic poem which unites the two may be taken seriously. Yet this approach strikes me as a little too swift: labelling such poetry parodic and pushing it rapidly outside the genre of didactic poetry seems only to displace, not to tackle, the issue; are imagination and anthropomorphism so incompatible with instruction? Toohey seems to assume so: 'It is as if Ovid had asked himself the question, how do you turn a practical manual into something impractical—something purposeless?'⁴⁴ Even more intriguing is Toohey's refusal to see this tension in Oppian's *Halieutica*, a text which surely rewards this reading to a greater degree. Instead, Toohey paints Oppian as a 'deranged didactic poet' whose 'warped concern with sexuality' comes close to 'psychological instability', who is hysterically unable to countenance animal sexuality in any form and who writes only to exorcise the spectre of animal lust.⁴⁵ Toohey takes Oppian's *Halieutica* to instantiate an unwavering polarity between man's god-like superiority and a frenzied animal kingdom, and Oppian's account of fishing becomes 'an exercise in the eradication of profligate, uncontrolled animal eros'.⁴⁶ I find this hard to countenance. After all, what is novel about the *Halieutica* is that it does *not* simply present a base and unadulterated 'animal' *eros*, but rather an *eros* which is often astonishingly human. The poem's similes focus less on scenes of erotic frenzy than upon the kind of love which marks out everyday social relations: the affection of a boy for his nurse, the loyalty of a man to his friends, youths entranced by a beautiful woman, the decorous love of a mother for her son, a wife's love for her husband. These are a far cry from the sheer animal passion which Toohey constructs. The *Halieutica* does not simply depict culture vanquishing nature or the rational pitted against the bestial; rather, when anthropomorphism is pushed to its assimilating extreme at the moment of capture, precisely when man and beast ought to be most distinct, Oppian's reader is forced to pause and think more carefully about the relationships the poem constructs.

4. Fools and Moral Instruction

According to Effe, as we have seen, the *Halieutica* deals only in a limited sense with the *techne* of fishing; the true impact of the poem lies rather in moral instruction, effected through Oppian's depiction of the sea as a 'mirror of human existence'.⁴⁷ Effe perhaps overstates the tone of moral improvement in the *Halieutica*—at the expense, for instance, of the socio-literary context or political rhetoric of the poem—yet it is true, as Toohey too has emphasised, that an implicit moral order underpins the poem. Oppian's fish are doomed by their greed or lust, caught by their lack of control over their own desires, and the act of fishing promotes a clear pattern of transgression and punishment which stands as a tacit corrective to our own human tendencies, aligned by analogy with those of the fish. This moral edification usually functions on the level of the simile, yet Oppian occasionally applies his precepts directly to mankind. The poet recounts the cautionary tale of the Atlantic star-gazer, known in the *Halieutica* as the ἡμεροκοίτης or 'day-sleeper', a creature so stupid and gluttonous that, given the opportunity, it would eat until it burst or were itself eaten. Oppian bids us take note of the fish's indolence, worthy of not one but two superlatives: φράζω δ' ἀφραδίῃ προφερέστατον ἡμεροκοίτην/ιχθύν, ὃν παρὰ πάντας ἀεργότατον τέκεν ἄλλη ('but observe the day-sleeper, a fish of surpassing stupidity, laziest of all that the sea brings forth', 2.199f.), exhorting his readers to heed the creature's sorry end:

καὺτε, γοναὶ μερόπων, οἷον τέλος ἀφραδίῃσι
λαϊμάργοις, ὅσον ἄλγος ἀδηφαγίῃσιν ὀπηδεῖ·
τῷ τις ἀεργίην δυστερπέα τήλε διώκοι
καὶ κραδίης καὶ χειρός, ἔχοι δέ τι μέτρον ἐδωδῆς
μηδ' ἐπὶ πανθοίῃσιν νόον τέρποιτο τραπέζας·
πολλοὶ γὰρ τοῖοι καὶ ἐν ἀνδράσιν, οἷσι λέλυνται
ἡνία, γαστρὶ δὲ πάντας ἐπιτρωνῶσι κάλως·
ἀλλὰ τις εἰσορόων φεύγοι τέλος ἡμεροκοίου.

(2.217-24)

Hear, you generations of men, what kind of end lies in foolish gluttony, what kind of pain accompanies greed. Thus one should chase ill-pleasured indolence far away from both heart and hand, and have some measure in eating, and not rejoice in the tables of splendid feasts. For there are many such men among mankind who slacken the reins and give all rope to their belly. But one should observe and avoid the end of the day-sleeper.

Imperatives, optatives, the generic τις and the collective address to the γοναὶ μέρωπων compound the unusually explicit moral instruction in this passage, which the scholiast labels a γνώμη (*ad* 2.217). Not only do we learn *about* fish

(which bait to use to catch them), but we learn *from* them (how to avoid their fatal mistakes). This is an approach familiar from both Greek and Roman didactic; as A.J. Boyle remarks of Virgil, '[w]hat happens in Hesiod, happens in the *Georgics*: didacticism about agriculture proves metaphor for didacticism about man'.⁴⁸ Indeed, Oppian adopts a distinctly Hesiodic tone in this passage, down even to the name by which he refers to the fish: ἡμεροκοίτης, a morally loaded term which draws upon the connotations of the kenning ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ (Hes. *Op.* 605), the day-sleeping thief against whom Hesiod warns in the *Works and Days*. It can hardly be coincidence, after all, that in one of the most ethically and didactically explicit passages in the poem Oppian should choose this Hesiodic term rather than an alternative name for this fish, such as Oppian's own νυκτερίς, the well-attested οὐρανοσκόπος or the euphemistic καλλιώνυμος.⁴⁹ Later in this same book, moreover, Oppian will allude quite specifically to the image of the Hesiodic day-sleeping thief, depicting the predatory octopus as a ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ who assails a drunken reveller.⁵⁰ Here Oppian's emphasis upon the idleness of the ἡμεροκοίτης, and the ἀεργός and ἀεργία of lines 200 and 219 (the only two occurrences of this word in the *Halieutica*), reflect the moral precepts concerning the eponymous ἔργα of the *Works and Days*, and recall that section of the poem in which Hesiod urges Perses to industry: ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν ὄνειδος, ἀεργίη δέ τ' ὄνειδος ('work is no disgrace: it is idleness which is a disgrace', *Op.* 311).⁵¹ There, idleness leads to hunger and evil-doing; here, as in Hesiod's exemplum of the drones, it is connected with gluttony and excess. As Oppian remarks, fish bring about their own destruction, for the race of fish is σιφλός (3.183)—deficient, lazy, gluttonous and blindly self-destructive, inevitable victims of their own voracious passions.

A similar import may be found in Oppian's description of the greedy fish caught in Book 3, such as the black sea-bream, a species caught by baiting a disguised wicker fish-trap. These fish, reluctant at first, are soon enticed in by their 'ill-omened' (3.353) greed:

ἤδη δ' ἀτρομέοντες ἀολλέες ἔνδοθι κύρτου	355
ἀγρόμενοι πᾶν ἡμᾶρ ἐνήμενοι, ὥστε μέλαθρον	
κτησάμενοι, μίμνουσι, κακὴν δ' εὖραντο καλήν.	
ὥς δ' ὀπότε ὀρφανικοῖο μετ' ἡιθέοιο μέλαθρον	
οὔτι σαοφροσύνησι μεμηλότες ἥλικες ἄλλοι	
κλητοὶ τ' αὐτόμολοί τε πανήμεροι ἡγερέθονται	360
κτησιν ἀεὶ κείροντες ἀσημάντοιο δόμοιο,	
οἷα νέους ἀνίησι χαλίφρονας ἄκριτος ἦβη,	
ἐκ δὲ κακοφροσύνης ἐκέλην εὖραντο τελευτήν·	
ὥς τοῖς ἀγρομένοισι παρασχεδὸν ἵσταται ἄτη.	

(3.355-64)

After a while [the bream] gather fearlessly in throngs within the cage,
and they remain sitting there all day long, as if they had acquired a

house; but they have found an evil nest. Just as other friends of a similar age, unconcerned with moderation, congregate throughout the day at the house of an orphaned youth, some invited and some uninvited, and continually consume the possessions of the masterless house in such ways as rash youth urges thoughtless young men, and of their folly meet a similar end—just so doom stands near for the assembled [fish].

The indolent bream, figured as adolescents, never stop to consider the consequences of their behaviour, and their thoughtlessness (χαλιφροσύνη, 362) and lack of moderation (σαοφροσύνη, 359) cede to a more sinister imprudence, a folly (κακοφροσύνη, 363) which seals the creatures' imminent doom. The fish glimpse their fate too late, and struggle in vain against their imprisonment: νήπιοι, οὐδ' ἔτι κύρτον ὁμῶς εὖοικον ἔχουσιν ('fools, who no longer find the trap such an excellent home', 3.370).

It is now worth dwelling upon the fact that Oppian chastises his fish as νήπιοι, a loaded and recurrent word in this poem. The semantic field of νήπιος and cognate forms encompasses both child and fool, and the word is employed in the *Halieutica* five times in each sense.⁵² Yet these are by no means fully separate categories, and the impact of the word νήπιος derives from its complex nexus of associations; it is no surprise that Oppian's foolish bream are figured not as adults but as adolescents who never stop to consider the consequences of their actions. John Heath puts it well:

νήπιος and its compounds can simply denote the young ('child, infant, offspring')...but these words are also often used to characterize an adult acting in a childish, thoughtless, or improvident fashion—'fool' is the common translation, although the difference between 'foolish' and 'childish' can be difficult to distinguish.⁵³

It is significant that Oppian repeatedly compares his fish to vulnerable infants, foolish children and wayward adolescents: the dentex rejoice even whilst hooked, like children delighting in sports (3.619), whereas the mackerel enticed into the fisherman's net are like infants putting their 'childish' (νηπιέη, 585) hand into a flame (3.581-85). Grouped together as deficient in λόγος and incapable of real engagement in adult society, the child, the fool and the animal may be said to represent the imperfectly socialised,⁵⁴ and even the etymology of the word νήπιος, which has long proved troublesome to scholars, marks the νήπιος as a social outlier, one who cannot speak or who is disconnected from the structuring bonds of society.⁵⁵ The innocent delight felt by inexperienced (ἀπείρητοι, 581) children lends a sorrowful pathos to the image of the trapped mackerel, to which we might compare the νήπια τέκνα of the Homeric epics, those weak infants who act as paradigms of helplessness in the midst of war.⁵⁶ Theirs is the innocence of nature and youth. Yet this same innocence is also tinged with a sinister edge, for Oppian depicts not children but fish which *act*

like children, and, as in the Homeric epics, whereas the νήπιον τέκνον is usually an object of pity, when other figures are described as a νήπιος this is a proleptic marker, a sign that the character has erred and is about to die.⁵⁷ Recent studies have shown that νήπιτοι in the Homeric epics act in a deluded fashion or fail to exhibit the behaviour appropriate to a rational adult, inviting their own punishment through incorrigible foolishness: Nastes carries gold into battle like a girl, Patroclus begs to borrow Achilles' arms, Odysseus' companions eat the cattle of Hyperion and Penelope's suitors revel in their complacent hubris.⁵⁸ To act like a νήπιος is to overlook the consequences of one's actions, and to consign oneself to an early death: the word is applied 'to adults who are unintelligent or unknowing, who put their trust in the wrong things or are deceived', to 'those who do not understand battle and its design, or the gods and their design' and to those who, like children, have not learned the ways of war.⁵⁹ In depicting a series of νήπιτοι punished, that is, Oppian provides an instantaneous version of that model of transgression and retribution which lies at the heart of martial epic, and it is upon this basis that the moral framework of the *Halieutica* rests. These fish, the sea-bream (3.370), melanurus (3.457), swordfish (3.568) and pelamyds (4.572), are overcome by their greedy desires and are blinded to the consequences of their actions; they act like νήπιτοι and seal their own fate.

5. Models of Education

Yet Oppian's analogies with children also point to an important difference between man and beast: whereas a child soon learns not to put its hand in the fire, and a youth, it is hoped, will eventually grow up and join the world of the socialised adult, these fish will not (or rather, cannot) learn from their mistakes: their error is their death. In this sense, the obtuseness of the νήπιτοι in this poem encourages the reader to enter into a sort of complicity with the poet in despairing (and taking advantage) of these recalcitrant fish. Phillip Mitsis, arguing that in the *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius casts Memmius as a foolish child in need of instruction, has similarly conceived of Lucretius' strategy of 'using and abusing the addressee as a *népios*', a move which, as he sees it, allows the audience to collude with the poet over the addressee's stupidity.⁶⁰ In declaring of the melanurus: νήπιτοι, οὐδ' ἐδάησαν ὅσον πινυτώτεροι ἄνδρες/οἱ κείνους καὶ πάντα ἀλγευόμενους ἔλον ἄγρη ('fools, who do not know how much wiser men are, who take them captive for all their attempts to escape', 3.457f.), the *Halieutica* engages in a similar enterprise. The poet establishes a contrast between the foolish fish (νήπιτοι) and their human captors, who are endowed with an antithetical wisdom and intelligence (πινυτή) all the more striking given the once-standard view that νήπιος originated as a negative variant of the word πινυτός;⁶¹ the reader is naturally implicated in this human cunning. Much of the *Halieutica*, indeed the whole of Book 2, is devoted to the question of stupidity and craft, and although the poem cites numerous examples of cunning

fish eluding or capturing one another (and occasionally defeating even the fisherman), we are more regularly confronted with utter stupidity on the part of these fish, such as the swordfish which perishes through its own folly (μέγα νήπιος ἀφορσύνησιν/ὀλλυται, 3.568f.).⁶² Although the dim-witted creature never seems to learn, we as readers can hardly fail to engage with the poet's warnings about the dangers of rash stupidity and this rhetoric of the fisherman's intellectual superiority over the swordfish, which 'has no weapon in its wits such as is set in its jaws' (οὐδέ οἱ ὄπλον ἐνὶ φρεσίν, οἶον ἄρηρεν/ἐκ γενύων, 3.571f.).

At this point, however, it might be helpful to distinguish the kind of νήπιος addressed in the Homeric epics from the νήπιος addressed by Hesiod and poets in the didactic tradition. For whilst the former is a character generally doomed to certain death, the latter, for all his likely obstinacy, is more often singled out as the recipient of wisdom and exhortation to change. The νήπιος addressed in a didactic poem stands at the centre of that text's structural vision of education and progress, since education and the acquisition of knowledge is the central premise of didacticism. This is a model of instruction and improvement in which the νήπιος (whether fool or child) may become the ultimate symbol of the potential to learn; the figure of the fool in didactic poetry hints at a more dynamic element to the relationship between poet, reader and addressee, a relationship which 'calls our attention to the process of instruction'⁶³ and to the power of the poet to effect a change in his audience or addressee. When in the *Works and Days* Hesiod casts Perses as the fool who ought to listen to his brother's advice, ἐργάζεο, νήπιε Πέρση, ἔργα τά τ' ἀνθρώποισι θεοὶ διετέκμηραντο ('foolish Perses, work the work which the gods ordained for men', *Op.* 397f.), and declares that he will show him how to better himself: σοὶ δ' ἐγὼ ἐσθλὰ νοέων ἐρέω, μέγα νήπιε Πέρση ('I will speak good sense to you, most foolish Perses', *Op.* 286), this stubborn addressee becomes the focus for the didactic process effected through the poem.⁶⁴ In Toohey's words, '[i]t is the implied presence of the student, our addressee, which turns the merely informative into the instructive.'⁶⁵ In some ways, then, only part of the story is told by Mitsis' conception of the status of Memmius as an obtuse blockhead: 'throughout the poem, Memmius is portrayed as superstitious, intellectually limited, and prone to infantile fears. Indeed, nowhere in the poem is he treated as anything but an obvious *népios*.'⁶⁶ For didactic poetry intrinsically works against this notion of a static 'position' in which the didactic addressee is inscribed, as a fool or otherwise; despite Mitsis' conception of Memmius, the movement of a didactic poem towards the acquisition of knowledge is more often a dynamic process. As Kromer puts it, '[u]nlike encomiastic poetry, which focuses on the attainment of a particular goal, didactic poetry emphasizes the process through which it is reached.'⁶⁷ Along these lines, Jenny Strauss Clay has argued for a reading of the *Works and Days* in which the reader observes the *progression* of Perses from μέγα νήπιος ('most foolish', or, as David Konstan translates it, 'great booby') to δῖον γένος ('well born') and back again.⁶⁸ According to Clay,

the various epithets used to address Perses—his name, μέγα νήπιε (286, 633), νήπιε (397) and διόν γένος (299)—signify not internal inconsistencies in the portrayal of the addressee but rather the implied progress (and final, pointed, lack of progress) made by the poet's brother: 'those changes represent the dynamic linear evolution of Perses' education', in which '[e]ach of these vocatives present critical moments and significant signposts in the education of Perses.'⁶⁹ The reader is called upon to imagine the position of the silent addressee, constructing Perses' *Urdummheit* as part of an ongoing pedagogical relationship between poet, addressee and implied reader. This is a reading of didactic poetry which privileges movement, change, development—not just knowledge, but the *process* of learning.⁷⁰

Yet if most fish in the *Halieutica* are constructed as νήπιτοι who fail to learn, we should note one of the few animals to be depicted in a *successful* pedagogic environment: the dolphin, that sea-creature closest of all to the human. In Book 1, after an extended discussion of the proximity of dolphins to mankind, Oppian describes the birth and 'education' of the infant dolphin:

τόφρα μὲν οὖν τοίησι τιθινεῖησι μέμηλεν
 ἀλλ' ὅτε κουρίζωσιν ἐδὸν σθένος, αὐτίκα τοῖσι
 μήτηρ ἡγήτειρα κατέρχεται εἰς ὁδὸν ἄγρης
 ἱεμένοις θήρην τε διδάσκειται ἰχθυόεσσαν...

(1.663-66)

And so during that time [the dolphin] is engaged in nursing [her young]; but when they reach the strength of youth, their mother, acting as guide, immediately comes to the path of hunting and teaches the eager creatures the art of catching fish.

Don Fowler has espoused the notion of the standard 'plots' which stand at the heart of didactic poetry, the typical structures by which a linear order or narrative is imposed upon a non-linear body of knowledge.⁷¹ Such plots may be traced through the images and metaphors of education which pervade didactic poems: the path followed, the child taught, the dawning of light, the hunt, all of which provide models of progress for an implied pupil. In Oppian's image of a maternal dolphin instructing her young, then, three of Fowler's structural markers of learning emerge: the hunt, the path (ὁδός) and the child being taught. Here the path, a loaded symbol throughout the *Halieutica*, is metaphorical, the hunt is literal, and the education of the dolphin, as we shall see, functions on both levels. The vision of a dolphin who teaches (διδάσκειται) her offspring the art of fishing recalls precisely that act in which the reader engages as s/he reads the poem and learns of the sea. Just as the dolphin acts as a surrogate fisherman at 5.425-41, here she is a surrogate for the poet's own didacticism, and the passage is followed by a simile in which infant dolphins are compared to children returning from school:

ὥς δ' ὅτε μουσοπόλων ἔργων ἄπο παῖδες ἴωσιν
 ἀθρόοι, οἱ δ' ἄρ' ὀπισθεν ἐπίσκοποι ἐγγύς ἔπονται
 αἰδοῦς τε πραπίδων τε νόον τ' ἐπιτιμητῆρες
 πρεσβύτατοι· γῆρας γὰρ ἐναίσιμον ἄνδρα τίθησιν·

(1.680-83)

As when a crowd of children come from the works of the Muses, and their guardians follow close behind: the elders, overseers of respect and heart and mind (for old age makes a man righteous)...

The poet's repeated accent upon education and knowledge is striking, and the scholia gloss μουσοπόλων as 'school', ἐπίσκοποι as 'pedagogues' and ἐπιτιμητῆρες as 'teachers'. Yet what precisely are these dolphins being taught? If the dolphin is the one sea-creature popularly thought to learn from its experiences,⁷² it is at the same time assumed to be competent already, by instinct, in swimming and in catching fish. A Greek proverb from this period speaks of one who seeks to impart knowledge already known: such redundant instruction was known as 'teaching a dolphin to swim', δελφίνα νήχεσθαι διδάσκεις.⁷³ Oppian here depicts a similar type of instruction, a dolphin teaching her young to fish; the animals' behaviour is not, as might have been thought, a matter of instinct, but is a body of learning, a *technē* to be acquired and taught, comparable to the schooling process, just as it is for the readers of the *Halieutica*.⁷⁴

In that sense, Oppian's concern with the role and limits of education asks to be seen in relation to a contemporary concern with questions of nature, culture and the boundaries of knowledge. This, after all, is the age of the Second Sophistic and of the πεπαιδευμένος or educated man, in which education became *the* means of fashioning the self.⁷⁵ As Yun Lee Too puts it, '[s]ophistic culture is born out of a realization of the capacity for social advancement through education.... Accordingly, pedagogy is necessarily predicated on the notion that nature alone does not determine one's social or intellectual position. Nurture plays an important part, articulated variously as skill (*technē*), theory (*theoria*), or imitation (*mimesis*).'⁷⁶ Oppian's didactic verse, in its self-conscious concern with the question of education amongst animals and the education of the poem's reader, bears witness to an awareness of the social value of knowledge and education, and to the widespread, self-consciously belated reframing of sophistic debates over νόμος and φύσις (nature and culture). We might, for instance, compare Oppian's educated dolphins to the speech given by the pig Gryllus, protagonist of Plutarch's dialogue on the rationality of beasts. Here Gryllus interrogates Odysseus on the question of 'innate' animal knowledge:

παρὰ τίνος γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἐμάθομεν νοσοῦντες ἐπὶ τοὺς ποταμοὺς χάριν
 τῶν καρκίνων βαδίζειν; τίς δὲ τὰς χελώνας ἐδίδαξε τῆς ἔχως φαγού-
 σας τὴν ὀρίγανον ἐπεσθίειν; τίς δὲ τὰς Κρητικὰς αἶγας, ὅταν πε-
 ριπέσωσι τοῖς τοξεύμασι, τὸ δίκταμνον διώκειν, οὐ βρωθέντος ἐκ-

βάλλουσι τὰς ἀκίδας; ἂν γὰρ εἴπῃς, ὅπερ ἀληθές ἐστι, τούτων δι-
δάσκαλον εἶναι τὴν φύσιν, εἰς τὴν κυριωτάτην καὶ σοφωτάτην ἀρχὴν
ἀναφέρεις τὴν τῶν θηρίων φρόνησιν·

(Plut. *Mor.* 991e-f)⁷⁷

From whom did we [pigs] learn, when we are sick, to go to the rivers for crabs? Who taught tortoises to devour marjoram after eating the snake? Who taught Cretan goats, when they are struck by arrows, to seek out dittany, which, when it is eaten, induces the barbs to fall out? If you tell the truth and say that nature is teacher of these things, then you elevate the thinking of beasts to the wisest and most masterful first principle.

These words, purporting to turn to the animal kingdom for evidence of what is 'natural', are spoken by a talking pig, a self-acknowledged sophist whose arguments invert the cultural expectations of even that archetypal smooth-talker, Odysseus, and paradoxically convince him of the 'natural' superiority of swine.⁷⁸ All around, the natural stands interrogated over its cultural and pedagogical credentials. Compare too Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, a text roughly contemporary with the *Halieutica*, and whose testing of the interrelations of nature, education and (particularly sexual) convention has been the focus of much recent scholarship. Longus' emphasis on erotic pedagogy, as Froma Zeitlin has shown, 'inscribes human sexuality in the social sphere' and reveals the cultural rootedness of all such 'natural' processes; in watching the much-vaunted 'natural' be taught, Longus' readers are forced to confront the bounds of νόμος and φύσις, questioning whether 'conventions [are] rooted in nature, or (quite the reverse) is "nature" in our perceptions of it sheerly convention?'⁷⁹ Like those foolish fish figured by Oppian as inexperienced children or foolish adolescents, Longus' spectacle of education creates a fissure between the callow youths within the narrative and the self-conscious reader of the novel, who 'is asked to view through two lenses, that of the naïve child whose primary learning provides the very plot of the story and that of the sophisticated voyeur who is permitted to participate in both domains of perception.'⁸⁰

In a parallel move to that of Plutarch and Longus, Oppian questions the very idea of the instinctive wild: on his account, the so-called 'argument from nature' can never, for all its posturing, be a self-evident truth, but is always culturally loaded; not even a discourse about fish can escape the human, the cultural and the taught. And if the *Halieutica* is a poem in which, as in Longus, Eros himself becomes an educator, this time the god is constructed as a teacher even of fish: ὁπλίζῃ δὲ καὶ ἐν νεπόδεσσι κελαινοῦς/ἀτράκτους, ὥς μή τι τεῆς ἁδίδακτον ἀνάγκης/λείπεται, μηδ' ὅστις ὑπόβρυχα νήχεται ἰχθύς ('but even amongst fish you ready your dark arrows, that none should be left untaught regarding your force, not even the fish which swims underwater', 4.37-39). It is all very well to speak of the love a creature bears for its offspring as αὐτοδίδακτος ('innate' or 'self-taught', 1.705; cf. the electric ray at 2.57), but in a

didactic poem in which even the innate is framed in terms of teaching, the cultural and linguistic baggage of such terminology weighs heavy indeed.⁸¹ We can, it seems, hardly avoid the importance this poem invests in *paideia*, and the very form of Oppian's stylised, archaising and allusive hexameters, which look back over nearly a thousand years of Greek literary tradition, foregrounds questions of education and self-conscious literary awareness in the literature of the Second Sophistic. It is in this context of a focus on education that Oppian depicts the maternal seal, distinguished, like the dolphin, as ζωοτόκος or mammalian (1.643-45). Giving birth on dry land, the seal nurtures its young with care and devotion:

μίμνει δ' ἥματα πάντα δωδέκα σὺν τεκέεσσιν	690
αὐτοῦ ἐνὶ τραφερῇ· τρισκαιδεκάτῃ δὲ σὺν ἡοῖ	
σκύμνους ἀγκὰς ἔχουσα νεαλδέας εἰς ἄλλα δύνει	
παισὶν ἀγαλλομένη πάτρην ἅτε σημαίνουσα.	
ὥς δὲ γυνὴ ξείνης γαίης ἔπι παῖδα τεκοῦσα	
ἀσπασίως πάτρην τε καὶ ὄν δόμον εἰσαφίικηται,	695
παῖδα δ' ἐν ἀγκοίνῃσι πανηματίῃ φορέουσα,	
δώματα δεικνυμένη, μητρὸς νομόν, ἀμφαγαπάζει,	
τερπωλὴν ἀκόρεστον· ὃ δ' οὐ φρονέων περ ἕκαστα	
παπταίνει, μέγαρόν τε καὶ ἥθεα πάντα τοκήων·	
ὥς ἄρα καὶ κείνη σφέτερον γένος εἰναλίῃ θῆρ	700
ἐς πόντον προφέρει καὶ δείκνυται ἔργα θαλάσσης.	

(1.690-701)

She remains there on dry land with her offspring for a full twelve days; but with the thirteenth dawn she takes the new-grown pups in her arms and plunges into the sea, exulting in her children and pointing out, as it were, their fatherland. And as a woman who has given birth to a child in a foreign land comes gladly to her fatherland and to her own home, and carrying the child in her arms the whole day, shows him the house, his mother's home, and embraces him with affection and insatiable delight; and though he does not understand, he looks at each part, at the hall and at all his parents' usual places—just so that creature of the sea brings her offspring to the ocean, and shows them the works of the sea.

Once again, Oppian shows creatures educating their young. The baby seal, like the child to whom it is compared, does not understand (οὐ φρονέων, 698) what it perceives, and must be gradually introduced to the ways of the deep. No 'innate knowledge' here, then. Instead, the wonder of both child and seal-cub at this new realm parallels the astonishment of the reader who discovers the marvels of the deep through the poem itself, and far from instantiating the dichotomy of nature versus culture, man and beast are once more united in their endeavour to learn of the sea. And if the readers of the *Halieutica* are drawn to

identify with these 'didactic plots', the parallels between the infant seal's education and his or her own, then Oppian's assessment of the poem itself can only compound this connection. For when at the end of the *Halieutica* the poet sums up his work for the emperor, he touches upon just these issues: τόσσ' ἐδάην, σκηπτουῦχε διοτρεφές, ἔργα θαλάσσης ('this much I know [or 'have learned'] of the works of the sea, sceptre-bearer, you who are dear to the gods', 5.675). Whilst Oppian's δάω ('learn', 'know', and, in its reduplicated form διδάσκω, 'teach') draws attention to the instructional value of the *Halieutica*, the words ἔργα θαλάσσης describe the subject of the poem as exactly that which the seal teaches her young (1.701 as 5.675, the only two occurrences of the phrase in the poem). Finding him- or herself in the same position as Oppian's infant seal-cub, the reader of the *Halieutica* is further inscribed within the models of learning which run on both a literal and a metaphorical level throughout the poem.

Even the incidental figures in the *Halieutica*, moreover, foreground the process of education within the text as a parallel to the process of the implied reader learning about the sea. The goatherds who observe the extraordinary attachment of goats and sargues, for instance, are struck by astonishment when they 'first learn' of this phenomenon: ἔχει δέ τε θαῦμα νομῆας/πρωτοδαεῖς (4.322f.), as are the figures (goatherd, shepherd, woodcutter, huntsman) who, knowing little of the sea, witness the capture of the vast whale (5.248-54). In each case, the observer's amazement mirrors that of the implied reader as he or she, reading the poem, learns of new marine marvels. Yet the *Halieutica* equally acknowledges the possibility of a *failed* didacticism, a wonder which proves simply too much for its unprepared or inexperienced recipient, and which highlights the onus upon the pupil or reader in the pedagogical contract set out by a didactic poem. As Conte remarks of Lucretius, '[t]he relation between teacher-bard and addressee-disciple is not a tranquil agreement but a tense wager that might also fail.'⁸² We have seen this element of stupidity already in Oppian's foolish fish; in human terms, compare one of the first creatures to be detailed in the *Halieutica*: the remora or echeneis, an extraordinary fish which clings so fast with its mouth to a moving ship that the vessel is immobilised in full flight. Before he relates this tale, Oppian pauses to imagine the response of a sceptic:

θαῦμα δ' ὀλισθηρῆς ἐχενήιδος ἐφράσσαντο
ναυτίλοι· οὐ μὲν δὴ τις ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πιστώσαιτο
εἰσαΐων· αἰεὶ γὰρ ἀπειρήτων νόος ἀνδρῶν
δύσμαχος, οὐδ' ἐθέλουσι καὶ ἀτρεκέεσσι πιθέσθαι.

(1.217-20)

Sailors have related the marvel of the slippery echeneis, yet anyone who heard it would not in his heart believe it—for the minds of inexperienced men are always hard to fight against, and they are unwilling to believe even that which is accurate.

This discourse of the θαῦμα or marvel draws upon the Hellenistic traditions of paradoxography, a genre which also raises questions about information and credibility, the authority of the narrator and the role of the reader in the reception of a text.⁸³ Here Oppian offers a paradigm of incredulity which cautions against disbelief; the reader or pupil is discouraged from acting like the naive laymen against whom the poet must marshal his weapons of truth, and is drawn into a relationship of implicit pedagogical trust in the narrator. This image of terrestrial scepticism is mirrored by the unnamed observer in Book 5 who, gazing at the dying whale, expresses his undisguised horror at the sea and its monsters.⁸⁴ Whilst other onlookers marvel at the whale's might, this man, painted as a landlubber unaccustomed to the sea, prays fervently to Gaia, the nurturing earth, to keep him far from the sea and its untold terrors (5.333-49). This speech echoes the Hesiodic caution against the dangers of sea-faring, by now a familiar topos in Greek and Roman (didactic) poetry,⁸⁵ yet far from expressing the prudent advice of a discerning critic with whom the reader might fully identify, it marks the outburst of a terrified rustic. This very prayer re-enacts the reading process of the *Halieutica*: the intensity of the sea is evoked with a frisson of drama and danger, yet is contained within its limits and kept at a distance, just as on a broader level the poem depicts the dreadful power of sea and sea-monsters through the mediating and pleasurable filter of verse. Poet and reader, like the rustic himself, collude in their acknowledgement of the awe-inspiring magnitude of the sea, yet theirs is a glimpse of danger offered very much from the safety of the earth.⁸⁶ As the anxious rustic puts it, ἀλλά, Θάλασσα./χαῖρέ μοι ἐκ γαίης ('but, Sea, I greet you from the land', 5.348f.).⁸⁷

6. Conclusion

The fishermen's own labours are hard and their hopes fragile (cf. 1.35-49), yet the *Halieutica* allows the reader privileged access to this dangerous and inaccessible realm. In underscoring the hostility of the sea, Oppian affords the reader a correlative pleasure in learning about this wilderness from afar, encountering dreadful monsters through the medium of his elegant verse. In contrast to the harsh world of the fisherman, the poem itself is figured as a source of pleasure both for the emperor and for the wider implied audience of the poem, just as the imperial fish-preserves, in which abundant hordes of fish wait to leap with delight onto the emperor's hook, provide a pleasantly sanitised version of the act of fishing itself (1.56-72).⁸⁸ This article has looked at Oppian's presentation of knowledge in the *Halieutica*, arguing that the intriguing complexities of this didactic poem refuse to let us see it as a 'dusty' body of facts rendered palatable by an ornamental poetic garb. Instead, like many didactic poems, the *Halieutica* overtly reflects upon its role in the transmission and promulgation of knowledge and creates a tension in those very models of nature and culture, the literal and the literary, which lie at the heart of the work.

The poem's metaphors and images of education allude in various ways to both the martial and didactic epic traditions, providing a model for the reader's own progress through, and enjoyment of, the *Halieutica*, as well as underpinning the poem's moral framework. As Robert Frost once put it, 'education by poetry is education by metaphor',⁸⁹ and I hope to have argued in this article that the similes and analogies which pervade the text, far from offering a mere distraction from the banality of its subject-matter, prove central to Oppian's entire didactic enterprise.

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NOTES

1. References are to Oppian's *Halieutica*, following the text of Fajen (1999); all translations of Greek and German are my own. I should like to thank Richard Hunter, Katerina Carvounis, Helen Morales, William Fitzgerald and the anonymous readers for their helpful comments and feedback on various versions of this work.

2. The *Hal.* refers only to an emperor 'Antoninus' and his son, but the weight of internal and external evidence points to Marcus Aurelius. See Mair (1928) xiii-xxiii; Keydell (1939) 698f.; Fajen (1999) viii. Neither the Suda nor the extant *vitae* distinguish between the author of the *Halieutica* and that of the (later) *Cynegetica*, who are nowadays acknowledged to be different poets; see already Schneider (1776); Ausfeld (1876); James (1970) 1-4, with bibliography; Fajen (1999) ix; Hamblenne (1968); Whitby (2007b); although contrast White (2001).

3. Although the poem, like much Greek literature of the period, is currently undergoing a renaissance. Hopkinson (1994d) 185 calls the *Halieutica* 'the most accomplished and attractive didactic poem to survive from the Imperial period', and recent full-scale studies on the *Hal.* include James (1970); Fajen (1969, 1999); Rebuffat (2001); Bartley (2003); Benedetti (2005).

4. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1912) 255.

5. Horster and Reitz (2005) speak of didactic poetry as a 'hinge' (7). This function of the genre has long been observed (cf. the prolegomena of the scholia to the *Works and Days*), and plays a prominent role in Goethe's 1827 essay 'Über das Lehrgedicht', where didactic poetry is labelled 'an intermediate creation' (225) between poetry and rhetoric.

6. So Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.51-56, 85-87, on Greek and Roman 'epic' respectively. On Oppian as an ἐποποιός, see e.g. Athen. 1.13b-c; Suid. s.v. Ὀππιανός. A number of relatively late treatises do distinguish didactic as a separate category of poetry; see Effe (1977) 9-26; Pöhlmann (1973), esp. 816-35; Lausberg (1990); Gale (1994) 100-02; Volk (2002) 30-32.

7. Cox (1969) 124.

8. Arist. *Poet.* 1447b17-20. On fiction, falsehood and the status of didactic poetry, cf. Plut. *De Aud. Poet.* 16c.

9. Newman (1871) 12.

10. Anon. *APL*. 16.311.

11. Bartley (2003). Cf. James (1970) on the Homeric tendency of Oppian's linguistic innovations; Giangrande (1970), esp. 89 on Oppian's familiarity with abstruse Homeric scholarship.

12. See already Eust. III.667.12f. van der Valk; Rittershusius (1597) 7r-7v.

13. 1.709-31, in which paradigms of animal love remind the reader that parental affection is not only a human preserve; compare analogous Homeric similes, e.g. the reunited Odysseus and Telemachus weeping like bereaved Lämmergeier (*Od.* 16.216-19). Oppian's similes of the cranes and pygmies (1.620-25; cf. *Il.* 3.3-7) and blood-sucking harvest-flies (2.445-52; cf. *Il.* 17.570-72) similarly allude to well-known Homeric parallels; see James (1969).

14. In which even the fishermen carry weapons 'as if for war' (ὥστε εἰς ἄρρη, 5.150). Cf. the Thracians' gory slaughter of the pelamys at 4.531-61, which Oppian labels an εἰδωλον πολέμοιο (4.561); cf. 4.534, 554.

15. Conte (1986) 142f. *et passim*.

16. A form of inversion common to much didactic poetry, as when Virgil likens vines to soldiers (*G.* 2.279-83). See Schindler (2000) 158-66; Thomas (1986) 178f.; Lausberg (1990) 180f.
17. 'Heroic epic' here including both the Homeric epics and the broader Epic Cycle; on the *Telegony* ascribed to Eugammon of Cyrene, see Apollod. *Epit.* 7.36, and on creative misprision and the 'family romance', see Bloom (1973) and then Ricks (1976). As Hunter (2004a) notes at 99: 'The passing-on of wisdom and "heroic" values from father to son within the epic, most famously staged in the relations of Odysseus and Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, acts as a figure for the values which the epic itself transmits to successive generations and the cultural significance which it bears.' That Telegonus is drawn as Odysseus' bastard son further underscores the *Halieutica's* portrayal of the oblique relationship between didactic and heroic epic, Telegonus and Telemachus.
18. Fowler (2000) 218. On this 'incorporative' tendency of didactic poetry, cf. Moerschini and Sykes (1997) 60.
19. Bartley (2003) 158.
20. Note the apposite framing of this passage: the antidote to this poison is obtained from plants native to Oppian's homeland Cilicia (*Al.* 402-04), and the pharicum itself is introduced directly after a discussion of the medicinal qualities of sea-creatures (*Al.* 390-96).
21. Cf. Hunter (2004b) 228f. on Dionysius the Periegete.
22. See 1.383-93, 580-83, 643, 647-85; 2.533-52, 628-41; 5.416-518.
23. Douglas (1966). Cf. Sperber (1996).
24. Though the distinction between simile and direct parallel is a fine one; see McCall (1969), esp. vii, 259.
25. E.g. Thgn. 215-18; Pi. fr. 43 SM; Luc. *Salt.* 67, in which the octopus becomes a model for the adroit adaptability of the poet, citizen, symposiast, sophist or politician.
26. Feeney (1992) 40; cf. 36. See also Kennedy (1999), esp. 33.
27. Feeney (1992) 35.
28. Effe (2005) 34.
29. Effe (1977).
30. Effe (1977) 151 writes of 'the poet's lack of interest in factual instruction'.
31. Cf. Cox (1969) 124: 'many would now claim that the art-form [of didactic poetry] is defunct because it is in principle impossible (resting upon a fusion of incompatible elements).'
32. Lucr. *DRN* 1.936-50 = 4.11-25; Hor. *Ars P.* 343f. (cf. 333f.). Already in the 3rd century BCE Neoptolemus of Parium advocated that verse should both delight and instruct: see Philod. *Poet.* 5 col. 13.8-15 Jensen; the idea gained credence in later rhetorical theory. See e.g. Kruschwitz (2005) 115; Brink (1971) 352; Schuler and Fitch (1983) 9.
33. Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 86.15: *nec agricolae docere uoluit, sed legentes delectare*. Cox (1969) 146f. points out that although these sentiments express 'at least half the truth...Seneca's mistake was to assume that these are all-embracing alternatives: there are other didactic levels where the essence of the poem may lie'.
34. Plato *Symp.* 196a, where Eros is ὑγρὸς τὸ εἶδος, a context further evoked when Oppian praises the god and reflects upon his genealogy; cf. the moist, feverish *eros* at *Phdr.* 251a-e (cf. 255c-d); πῶθος ὑγρὸς in *h.Pan* 33; Aphrodite in *Anacreont.* 16.21 West.
35. As reflected by the difficulties faced by editors of the *Hal.* in deciding upon a capitalisation scheme; the resultant inconsistencies in transl(ite)ration are indicative of the slippage Oppian effects between the personified and the practical *eros*.
36. Cf. Oppian's ὑγρὸς ἄρης at 5.254. On ὑγρὸς of the sea and sea-creatures, see 2.30, 196; 3.183; 4.142. Cf. Riffaterre (1980) on syllepsis of this kind as a figure for 'the duality of the text's message' (638).
37. Σχέτλι' Ἐρως; Thgn. 1231; A.R. 4.445. Theoc. 2.55 has Ἐρως ἀνταπέ, the adjective Oppian uses at *Hal.* 4.13; cf. Mel. *APL* 5.177. Cf. Bartley (2003) 48f.
38. Cf. esp. Strat. *APL* 12.241; see Murgatroyd (1984), and note e.g. the mosaics of *erotes* fishing in the Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina, Sicily. Kenney (1970) 383 nicely analyses Lucretius' gory take on the conventionally exsanguinated 'wounds' of Venus (*DRN* 4.1048-57), yet Oppian goes one step further in figuring ἔρως as a very literal death-blow to these fish.
39. Davidson (1997).
40. Diph. 32 K-A; Antiph. 164 K-A.
41. Matro fr. 1.33f. Olsen-Sens, on which see Olson and Sens (1999).
42. Cf. Riffaterre (1978) 6, on the reader surmounting the 'mimesis hurdle'.
43. Toohey (2004) 236.

44. Toohey (2005) 20f. Cf. *id.* (1996) 202, where he asserts that *Hal.* 4 and 5 are 'more curiosity pieces than instructional manuals'.
45. Toohey (2004) 253, 224, 246. It is worth noting Toohey's own unwarranted obsession with Oppian's emphasis upon *eros*, a distortion in part attributable to his wilful amalgamation of Oppian and pseudo-Oppian, whom he acknowledges to be different poets yet nevertheless treats as one.
46. Toohey (1996) 202.
47. Effe (1977) 142.
48. Boyle (1979) 4.
49. νυκτερίς ('bat') is noted by Oppian at 2.205; cf. Hsch. s.v. ἀμεροκοίτης; ὁ καλλιώνυμος ἰχθύς; Ael. NA 13.4.
50. δίκης σέβας οὔ ποτ' ἀέξων, *Hal.* 2.409, which further recalls Hesiod's injunctions against violent and unlawful behaviour (cf. Hes. *Op.* 327-34, 352). Aside from Euripides' ἀμερόκοιτοι (of bleating kids, *Cyc.* 58) and the linguistic analyses offered by ancient grammarians and lexicographers, Oppian's is the only extant instance of a post-Hesiodic ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνήρ or of the adjective *tout court*.
51. See *Op.* 298-316, in which ἀργία and cognate forms recur a full six times. Hesiod remarks upon the universal loathing with which the idle are greeted (τῷ δὲ θεοὶ νεμεσῶσι καὶ ἄνδρες ὃς κεν ἀεργὸς/ζῷη, *Op.* 303f.) and cites a parallel from nature: that of the drone which eats without working, benefiting from the labour of the bees (*Op.* 304-06). In his tale of the day-sleeper, Oppian inverts the direction of this analogy, turning not from man to nature but from zoological exemplum to *sententiae* about mankind.
52. Children: 3.512, 585; 4.329; 5.403, 579. Fools: 3.370, 457, 568; 4.572, 631.
53. Heath (2001) 131. The scholia refer to the melanurus at 3.457 as μωροί ('stupid') and elsewhere gloss νήπιος with μωρός, ἀνόητος ('unintelligent') or ἄφρων ('witless'); cf. the Iliadic D scholia *ad Il.* 2.38, 2.873; Suid. s.v. νήπιος. The scholia, however, also render as μωρός those νήπιτοι which Mair (though not Fajen) translates as 'youthful' or 'childish' (3.585 and 5.403), adding weight to Heath's caveat about the elisions of this difficult term. Cf. the modern Greek μωρό, 'baby'.
54. Cf. Arist. *HA* 588a-b, on the soul of a young child as little different from that of a wild beast. Cicero *De Fin.* 2.32 reports Epicurus' theory of children and animals as *specula naturae* ('mirrors of nature'), beings from whom the norms of life itself may be observed.
55. Hesychius glosses the derivative νηπύτιον with ἄφωνον ('voiceless'; cf. the Latin *infans*, 'child', lit. 'unable to speak'), from νη-, ἡπύω, though it is noted by Frisk (1970) II.215, III.157 and Chantraine (1974) 126 that the initial digamma in ἔπος renders this improbable. Edmunds (1990) 1-24, following Lacroix (1937), favours a negation of ἡπιος (i.e. 'lacking a connection', 'deficient in social cohesion'). Beekes (1969) 98-113, and esp. 111, objects that the prefix νη- did not exist as a negation in early Greek. Despite its questionable validity, however, it was the first explanation, that of the voiceless νήπιος, which seems to have been most common in antiquity. Apropos of the 'voiceless' helops fish, Carney (1967) 208 n.11 stresses the importance of a believed etymology as an indication of popular usage, regardless of linguistic certainty: 'semantically...the word gets "meaning" from its associations for its users.'
56. E.g. *Il.* 2.136, 311; 4.238; 6.95, 276, 310; 11.113; 17.223; 18.514; 22.63; 24.730; *Od.* 12.42; 14.264; 17.433.
57. Edmunds (1990) 60-97, noting that of the 38 occasions on which the word is applied to adults, 27 result in that figure's death. νήπιος is that rare example of a Homeric term of rebuke employed both in direct speech *and* by the primary narrator; see Griffin (1986), who contrasts the term with e.g. σχέτλιος and δαμόνιος.
58. Nastes: *Il.* 2.873; Patroclus: *Il.* 16.46 (cf. 16.686); Odysseus' men: *Od.* 1.8; suitors: *Od.* 22.32 (cf. 21.85; 22.370).
59. Ingalls (1998) 18, and elaborated at 32f.; Vermeule (1979) 114; cf. Ulf (1990) 53-56 on childishness.
60. Mitsis (1993) 127, and referring at 128 to the reader 'winking with the poet behind the back of the fool'.
61. See Boisacq (1950) II.669, 785; Brugmann and Delbrück (1892) II.1012.
62. Cf. Effe (1977) 144. Detienne and Vernant (1978), esp. ch. 2, offer a lively analysis of the place of μῆτις or cunning intelligence in the *Halieutica*.
63. Mitsis (1993) 123, of didactic poetry.
64. Cf. also the kings, also called νήπιτοι (Hes. *Op.* 40).

65. Toohey (1996) 2. Cf. Conte (1994) xxi: '[b]y its very nature, the didactic structure requires and valorizes the function of the addressee'; Schiesaro, Mitsis and Clay (1993).
66. Mitsis (1993) 125, although he does cite *DRN* 1.41-43 as an exception.
67. Kromer (1979) 10. A refinement of Mitsis' position is offered by Schiesaro (1993) in the same volume, and Mitsis' approach has since been criticised for presenting too static a view of the addressee: see Fowler (2000); Gale (2005); contrast also Keen (1985); Clay (1983) 225.
68. Clay (1993); Konstan (1993) 13.
69. Clay (2003) 34; Clay (1993) 26, arguing against e.g. West (1978) 36-40.
70. On the changing pedagogical relationship between poet and addressee in didactic poetry, see Fakas (2001) 85-148, who conceives of the *Phaenomena* and the *Works and Days* as 'Unterweisungs-dramen'; cf. Semanoff (2006) 303-17.
71. Fowler (2000). Cf. Volk (2002) 20-23 on journey metaphors in relation to 'poetic simultaneity' and the self-referential nature of didactic poetry.
72. In antiquity as today: Plutarch (*Mor.* 977f-978a) tells of fishermen sewing a rush on to ensnared dolphins, before releasing them. If the same dolphin is caught again (and recognised by its rush), it is beaten and spurned, since it ought to have learned its lesson. Nowadays, mirror-recognition strategies, as well as claims that dolphins 'speak' and can understand human communication, perpetuate such popular notions of the dolphin's quasi-human intelligence and capacity to learn.
73. Zen. 3.30. Cf. Apostol. 9.19 and Suid. s.v. ἰχθυάαι, on teaching fish to swim: ἰχθῦν νήχεσθαι διδάσκεις, similarly glossed as ἐπὶ τῶν διδασκόντων ἃ ἐπίστανται. Much, I imagine, like teaching one's grandmother to suck eggs.
74. Particularly if we recall the popularity of the *Halieutica* as a school-text (see n.10 above).
75. Bibliography on the Second Sophistic has expanded rapidly in recent years, and a number of studies have focused on *paideia* as a strategy of self-making: see e.g. Reardon (1971) 3-11; Anderson (1993) 8-11; Gleason (1995) xxi-xxiv; Swain (1996) 18-64; Schmitz (1997) 39-66 *et passim*; Whitmarsh (2001); observe also the scepticism of Brunt (1994). On Oppian and the Second Sophistic, see Klotz (2006) ch.7; Iglesias Zoido (1999) briefly considers Oppian against what he takes to be the common characteristics of Greek imperial poets. The 'Second Sophistic' is a notoriously slippery category, and one divorced by now from its Philostratean context; as with all such terms, my aim in considering the *Halieutica* as a second sophistic text is not to resort to invidious generalisation but to seek out common intellectual currents across an extremely broad body of literature.
76. Too (2000) 31.
77. Cf. the *agon* between Aristotimus and Phaedimus in Plut. *De Sollert. Anim.*, esp. 973a-974d.
78. Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 992a, where Gryllus claims that animal intelligence is 'not unlearned or unconstructed, but self-taught and self-sufficient'. Cf. Goldhill (1995) 64-66; Morales (1995) 40.
79. Zeitlin (1990) 419, 439. Cf. Winkler (1990) 103; Whitmarsh (2001) 82: 'This entire narrative constitutes a kind of controlled "experiment" whereby the relative importance of nature and culture in *paideia* may be gauged. Longus is manipulating his readers' awareness of the contemporary debate over the relative roles of nature and culture in the formation of identity.'
80. Zeitlin (1990) 438.
81. Whereas Phemius' famous claim to be αὐτοδιδάκτορ ('self-taught', *Od.* 22.347) seems to refer to divine inspiration, post-Homeric usage of the term tends towards an opposition between *nomos* and *phusis*; see Luschnat (1961-2); Assaël (2001). To return to sexual pedagogy and the ancient novel, Achilles Tatius' Clinias uses the term to describe what can(not) be taught in the domain of Eros: αὐτοδιδάκτορ γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς σοφιστής ('the god is a self-taught sophist', Ach. Tat. 1.10.1).
82. Conte (1994) 120.
83. See Hansen (1996), esp. 1-22; Giannini (1963). More broadly, both Plutarch and Aelian tend to foreground the marvellous or peculiar (see Murphy [2004] 22 on the *HN* as 'a kernel of secure knowledge delimited with wonders'), and wonders from the animal kingdom are incorporated also into the Greek novel: compare the tale of the viper and eel as related by Oppian at 1.554-79 (cf. Ael. *NA* 1.50, 9.66) with that narrated by Cleitophon at Ach. Tat. 1.18, appropriated for his own erotic ends. Cf. Morgan (1993).
84. Cf. de Jong (2004) 58-60 on anonymous focalisers. Gale (2005) 177f. discusses the 'anonymous objector' in Lucretius: 'the pupil's role as *potential* interlocutor is one on which the poet constantly plays throughout the poem' (original emphasis). Lucretius, like Oppian, quotes this 'objector' directly (*DRN* 1.803-8, 897-900), although in the *DRN*, unlike the *Hal*, these objections are voiced only to be roundly quashed.

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85. *Op.* 618-94. Cf. e.g. Arat. *Phaen.* 110, 295-99; Lucr. *DRN* 2.552-59; Virg. *G.* 1.456f.; Colum. *Rust.* 1, pref. 8; D.P. 709-17. See West (1978) 313f.; Kroll (1921), esp. 412f.; Lesky (1947) 31-37.

86. As Keydell (1939) 701 notes, Oppian never claims to have specific personal experience in fishing; cf. Wilamowitz (n.4 above); Sharrock (2005) 245 on the role of personal experience in technical prose and in didactic poetry.

87. Cf. the further prayer, *χέρσωι δὲ Ποσειδάωνα σέβοιμι* ('may I honour Poseidon on dry land', 5.339).

88. See Klotz (2006) ch. 7, who reads this emphasis upon pleasure as central to the *Halieutica* as a whole.

89. Frost (1966) 35.